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Editorial

Painstakingly lay down the requisites for achieving the strategic stalemate

The victory achieved by Red fighters in a tactical offensive in Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro on March 6 resonates in every corner of the archipelago. Fifteen fascist troopers were killed and seven were wounded in the firefight that also resulted in 13 high-powered firearms seized from the enemy and added to the arsenal of the people's army. This victory is joyously celebrated not only by Mindoreños but by the entire people. It inspires and drives the entire revolutionary movement to give its all in advancing the people's democratic revolution until victory. This as well as other victorious tactical offensives are especially relevant as the New People's Army (NPA) looks forward to celebrating its 41st anniversary.

The NPA's major victory in Oriental Mindoro is linked to and underscores the Red army's victories in various parts of the country since the year began. Vic-

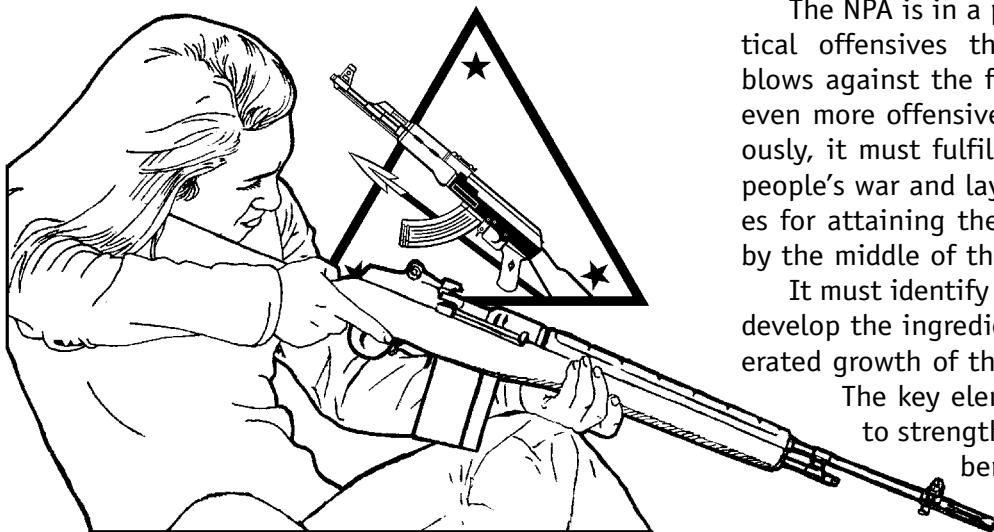
torious tactical offensives by the NPA in Abra, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Bulacan, Quezon, Palawan, Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Masbate, Eastern Samar, Negros, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, North Cotabato, Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur and other provinces have taken the entire country by storm.

These many victories bring to the fore the failure of the counterrevolutionary Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) campaign of the US-Arroyo regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Despite the casualties we sustained from the enemy's intense and relentless attacks, we have been steeled in the furnace of struggle. We continue to draw lessons, consolidate ourselves and gain strength. We have dealt heavy blows on the enemy.

The NPA is in a position to launch hundreds of tactical offensives this year, including several major blows against the fascist enemy forces. It can launch even more offensives in the coming years. Simultaneously, it must fulfill its tasks of all-sidedly advancing people's war and laying down the broad and solid bases for attaining the next stage of strategic stalemate by the middle of this decade.

It must identify and demolish the obstacles to, and develop the ingredients for, the continuous and accelerated growth of the armed revolutionary movement.

The key element in achieving this objective is to strengthen the leadership and entire membership of the Party and people's army ideologically, politically, mili-



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tarily and organizationally. This involves massive recruitment, ensuring the consolidation, continued development, intensive education, training and effective evaluation and deployment of cadres and forces and seeing to their welfare. The various echelons of leadership must be developed within the Party and people's army. Centers of leadership must be honed along with developing the second and third lines of leadership.

We must improve our ability to closely direct the war at the national, regional, subregional, provincial and front levels. This entails the issuance of appropriate guidelines, detailed planning and coordination of campaigns, tactical offensives and defense; effective use of dispersal and shifting of forces and maximizing both vertical (or centers of gravity) and horizontal forces. We must be adept at monitoring the enemy's every move and in raising our ability to quickly and flexibly launch tactical offensives. We must raise the level of discipline and security. Political and propaganda campaigns to resist the enemy's psywar campaigns must be closely guided.

We must build company-strength guerrilla fronts to imbue the armed revolutionary forces with greater ability and flexibility in confronting, encircling and attacking the enemy and in seizing and maintaining the initiative in battle. We must raise the number of company-size guerrilla fronts until they cover practically all districts and until Red political power encompasses the entire archipelago.

One key element that we are in the process of developing is the consolidation of strong contiguous guerrilla fronts towards the formation of more subregional military areas, especially in strategic locations. This is linked to the intensification and development of greater momentum in guerrilla warfare through the deployment of a platoon in every municipality covered by the guerrilla front, the distribution of local units of the people's army in the barrios and the development of more vertical forces. Guerrilla fronts must also build partisan units and strengthen their operations in cities within the front.

The necessary expansion of the Red army can be invigorated

through the development of a mass movement in military work. Militia units as well as self-defense corps and units must be organized on a wide scale and in great numbers up to platoon size in the villages. They must be mobilized for intelligence work, harassment operations, sparrow and arms seizure operations against the enemy as well as other military work in the localities, in accordance with the directives and guidelines of appropriate commands of the people's army. The mobilization of tens of thousands of forces will highlight the mass character of people's war and ensure mass recruitment for the people's army.

The horizontal forces of the NPA must have more time for tactical offensives, other military work as well as other important tasks within the guerrilla front they lead. Thus, military work will not be limited to the vertical forces and the spread of people's war can be ensured. To achieve such an objective, local Party branches and mass activists must be mobilized to carry out the greater part of mass work. This would include many aspects of consolidation and organizational work, propaganda work, mass campaigns, socio-economic work, alliance work, settling disputes among the people and many more aspects of local governance in their villages, and even in establishing new links and expanding towards nearby barrios.

It is important to raise the level of more local cadres to fulfill section-level tasks. This would necessitate more comprehensive but closer guidance by leading section cadres and committees on local Party branches and local activists as they accomplish these tasks. We must establish more revolutionary mass organizations, organs of political power, local leaders and activists to play a huge role in contact-



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ing, organizing and mobilizing the broad masses and the main source of recruits for the Party and people's army. We must also improve and raise the level and scope of the revolutionary mass organizations and organs of political power that are being established, up to the municipal and district level. We must deploy en masse cadres, forces and activists from the cities and town centers, including those among the ranks of workers and educated youth.

A major factor in accelerating the expansion and consolidation of the mass base is the advance of agrarian revolution and mass campaigns and struggles for the masses' needs and welfare. These must be expanded up to the municipal, district and even higher levels. Everywhere, we must invigorate antifeudal, antifascist and anti-imperialist campaigns. It is through these campaigns that we are able to rapidly reach other areas that should be covered by our efforts to organize the people and establish revolutionary political power.

In the face of worsening poverty brought about by the local and international crisis, we must persevere in advancing campaigns and struggles for land reform, rent reduction and lowering of interest rates on debts; raising the wages of farm workers; attaining just prices for the peasants' agricultural products; defending and asserting their rights and interests; and improving production, socio-economic projects and other activities that are beneficial to the people. These will imbue the people with vigor in supporting and further advancing the revolutionary struggle.

The increasingly volatile political situation resulting from the people's worsening poverty and oppression and their anger at the ruling classes is being relentlessly fuelled by the ruling regime's

Mindoro NPA wipes out platoon of elite military forces

THE New People's Army (NPA) annihilated an elite platoon under the Philippine Army's 2nd Infantry Division in an ambush on March 6 in Barangay Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro. This is the largest number of military casualties inflicted by the armed revolutionary forces this year.

A platoon of the 23rd Division Reconnaissance Company (DRC) was conducting clearing operations under the command of 2Lt. Ronnie Sip-sip when they were ambushed by NPA Red fighters around 5:30 a.m. The entire platoon was wiped out with 15 soldiers dead and seven others wounded. Military reports to the media claimed only eleven dead and seven wounded.

The NPA confiscated 13 of the enemy's high powered weapons which consisted of seven M16s, two M14s, two M203 grenade launchers, an M60 light machine gun and a Daewoo K3 light machine gun. Important military equipment were also seized.

This is the second time an enemy platoon has been wiped out on Mindoro island. In April 1991, a 21-man platoon under the 215th PNP Company led by Capt. Enrico Salapong was ambushed and annihilated.

Prior to this ambuscade, several tactical offensives and encounters took place in Mindoro. An NPA platoon clashed with a 26-man platoon of the Philippine Army's 80th IB in Sitio Tagumpay, Barangay Mapaya, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on February 24. Two enemy troops were wounded while the Red guerrillas were able to withdraw safely. A day before, the NPA meted punishment on a rabid counterrevolutionary in Sitio Imok, Barangay Paclolo, Magsaysay. Red fighters also sniped at 4th IB troops conducting a military operation in Barangay Tumbaga, Mansalay on February 17.

AB

schemes to cling to power and the intensifying contradictions among reactionaries vying for power. The political crisis is set to explode and may culminate in a new and widespread political storm that will accelerate severalfold the advance of the revolutionary war and the people's struggle. It is important for the revolutionary movement to seize the exceedingly favorable situation being created by all these elements.

The reactionary state will not relent in launching counterrevolutionary campaigns of suppression. Until the rotten reactionary and

puppet state and system's dying breath, the enemy will try to do everything in its power to pursue its insane bid to crush the armed revolutionary movement. Until the eve of victory, the revolutionary forces and the Filipino people will repeatedly face trials and ever greater challenges.

We must prepare for and continue to wage utmost resistance to thwart many more campaigns like Oplan Bantay Laya even as we further advance people's war and lay down the requisites for raising it to the next higher stage.

AB

**Soldier killed, 3 wounded in NPA ambush**

A soldier of the 69th IB was killed when the NPA blew up a military vehicle traveling between Barangay Paradise Embac and Paquibato District Proper in Davao City on the afternoon of March 12. Three more soldiers were reported wounded. The soldiers were dispatched to recover Speaker Prospero Nograles' campaign vehicle which the NPA had previously confiscated. Nograles is one of Gloria Arroyo's foremost lackeys.

In Negros Occidental, an NPA unit ambushed a platoon under the 12th IB in Sitio Tagaytay, Barangay Camalandaan, Cauayan on the evening of March 11, killing a CAFGU element and wounding another paramilitary element. The NPA also seized an M14.

NPA punishes 25th IB

FOUR soldiers were killed and an undetermined number wounded when the NPA Conrado Heredia Command in Southern Mindanao ambushed the 25th IB's 70-man Alpha Coy led by 1Lieutenant Inocencio. The hour-long ambush was launched on March 5 as the soldiers conducted operations in Purok 7, Barangay Salvacion, Monkayo, Compostela Valley.

The ambushed military unit was part of a bigger troop conducting operations in several gold-rich villages in Diwalwal.

The ambush was conducted to punish the 25th IB for being at the beck and call of warlord politicians who own huge gold mines in the area and are local business partners of foreign mining companies. The 25th IB stepped up its military operations when the Arroyo government opened up Higanteng Bato in Diwalwal as a new gold reserves site. The military is clearing the way for foreign and local compradors who are scrambling to begin mining operations in the area.

Elements of the 25th IB serve as private goons of Compostela Valley provincial board member Joselito Brillantes and Monkayo mayor Manuel Brillantes who are both running in the elections. The Brillantes family owns JB Management and Mining Corp.

Besides supporting the Brillantes' candidacies, the 25th IB is also blatantly campaigning for Gloria Arroyo's favored candidate Gilbert Teodoro.

After the ambush, the 25th IB struck back by harassing civilians in the area. On March 7, the 25th IB's Bravo Coy stopped nine farmers at a checkpoint in Km. 56 in Barangay Pasian, held them at gunpoint and confiscated the food they were carrying.

AB

**The unabated persecution of the Morong 43**

The wanton trampling of the Morong 43's human rights and their persecution at the hands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and reactionary courts go on unabated. The Morong 43 refers to 43 health workers who were captured on February 6 in Morong, Rizal and accused of being members of the New People's Army. Despite widespread condemnations of violations of due process and human rights, the AFP continues to detain the Morong 43 at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

The Court of Appeals denied on March 10 the Morong 43's petition for a writ of habeas corpus. The CA said that the petition filed by relatives of the 43 health workers could not be granted because the detainees had already been charged with criminal cases in court. The CA further stated that even if there were violations of the victims' rights, these were now voided by the criminal cases filed against them and the military's issuance of commitment orders for their continued imprisonment.

The CA's decision to deny the writ is based on a doctrine used during martial law which states that the imprisonment of a detainee is deemed legal once a case has been filed even if the arrest was illegal.





Meanwhile, the detained health workers have been suffering from various forms of harassment at the hands of the military. On March 1, the AFP secretly moved three of them to an undisclosed location. The three are Ellen Carrandang, Cherrielyn Tawagon and Valentin Paulino. They were first removed from their cells in the early morning of March 1, returned later that morning and again taken at around 2 p.m. along with their belongings. Their relatives and lawyers were not notified of their transfer. In the second week of March, two more detainees were included—Jennylyn Pizarro and John Mark Barrientos. Along with the ongoing psychological and mental torture, the military is enticing the detainees with payoffs and special privileges to cooperate with the military against the others.

Lawyers, relatives and concerned groups also continue to have difficulty talking with the victims. Only one detainee at a time is permitted to consult with their lawyer. The Morong 43's lawyer Atty. Romeo Capulong said the military is bribing and intimidating the victims and their families to get them to deny that they were tortured and agree to the military's accusations that they are NPA members. They are also being forced to terminate Capulong's services as their lawyer and accept lawyers handpicked by the military.

On March 18, the military refused outright to bring the Morong 43 to a scheduled hearing at the Commission on Human Rights. The military is also prohibiting Karapatan and GABRIELA, as well as lawyers connected with these organizations from visiting the victims. AB

Surface Ka Bea!

The NPA-Southern Mindanao strongly condemned the Eastern Mindanao Command's 26th IB for violating the rights of Aiza "Ka Bea" Ligawas, 21, and international protocols of war. Ka Bea is a provisional member of the NPA under the mass work team of the Alejandro Lanaja Command-Front 3 Operations Command.

The military arrested Ka Bea on February 27 in Sitio Kilangkob, Barangay Kaigan-gan, Veruela, Agusan del Sur. Not long after her arrest, she was forced to don a military uniform and used as a guide in military operations. Afterwards, she was brought to an undisclosed area. The military has yet to surface Ka Bea. AB

Harassment of progressives escalates as May 10 elections near

Harrassment against progressive parties and organizations is escalating as the May 10 election draws near. Such repression is particularly worse in the cities and town centers of Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and Mindanao.

In Valenzuela City, elements of the Philippine Air Force's 73rd Squad have stationed themselves in the same building where the office of the local Anakpawis chapter is located. KMU public information officer Carlos Maningat said that the soldiers are monitoring the progressive party's activities. They are also preventing several of its members from attending meetings at their office. There are also several complaints that the soldiers have been patrolling the city to

discourage people from voting for the party. This violates the law prohibiting the AFP from engaging in electioneering.

The soldiers claim that they are in the community merely to help clean up the streets and secure the area for the upcoming elections. In fact, military elements have been deployed to urban poor communities in Metro Manila since January. In Balut and Isla Puting Bato in Tondo, civilian-clad elements of the AFP's Civil Military Operations

have been roaming the area, going house to house, taking pictures, and questioning residents regarding their backgrounds and who the GABRIELA leaders and members are in the community.

In several barrios of Taguig City, posters with pictures of Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna and Liza Maza of the Gabriela Women's Party saying "partylist candidates of the New People's Army" have been put up. On nearby walls, posters of the butcher general Jovito Palparan, who is also now running for Senate were also posted.

In Sorsogon, soldiers have also been going door to door since



March to hunt down members of Bayan Muna, Anak-pawis, GABRIELA, Kabataan Partylist and ACT Party. On February 23, a certain Maj. Arnal Manjares confronted a group of volunteers campaigning for Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza and slapped one of them in the face. Manjares then brandished his pistol and threatened to kill the volunteers.

In Calamba City, 202nd Bde elements harassed Bayan Muna members in Laguna on March 7. The soldiers led by a Lieutenant Ansino arrived in Sitio Kabute, Barangay Real in Calamba City to allegedly launch a feeding program in the area. But upon their arrival, they started searching for Bayan Muna members. The residents refused to let the soldiers enter their neighborhoods. They barricaded the entrances and exits of the community, forcing the soldiers to leave the next day.

In Mindanao, soldiers in plainclothes tore down posters and other campaign materials of Ocampo and Maza in Cagayan de Oro and Iligan. In Baganga, Davao Oriental, 67th IB elements have been actively campaigning against progressive parties and candidates. Also, the 10th ID in Southern Mindanao in tandem with General Palparan have been disseminating vicious lies against local progressive candidates. Palparan, who is now based in Davao City persists in his defamation campaign against progressive leaders and activists.

AB

Grenades hurled at Bayan Muna official's house

Two people aboard a motorcycle hurled two grenades at the house of Bayan Muna's provincial coordinator in Aklan on the morning of March 19. No one was hurt after one of the grenades exploded in the backyard of Fernando Baldomero's house in Barangay Sta. Cruz-Biga-a, Lezo, Aklan. The other grenade which entered the house did not detonate but was caught on a cabinet.

Baldomero, a reelectionist councilor of Lezo town is campaigning for Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza of the Makabayan Coalition and Nacionalista Party. Ocampo condemned the attack and blamed it on the pattern of repression against activists and critics of the Arroyo administration.

AB

Military abuses in Samar

Military abuses are prevalent in the interior towns of Samar province.

In San Jose de Buan, a peasant was abducted by soldiers, tortured and forced to serve as a guide in military operations. Bertino Maestre, 60, from Sitio Salvacion, Barangay San Nicolas, San Jose de Buan was picked up by 34th IB elements along with his seven-year-old son and forced to join their operations from March 2-4. Maestre said the soldiers forced him to point out New People's Army (NPA) camps. When he could not do so, the soldiers pulled a plastic bag over his head and beat him up in front of his son. Maestre identified some of his torturers as soldiers named "Angel" and "Francisco" and a Lieutenant Latonio.

Before this, 34th IB elements seized the daughter of a cadre of the Communist Party of the Philippines and NPA. Michelle Adelantar, 17, was seized on February 3 by elements of the 34th IB in San Jose de Buan. The military illegally detained her and placed her in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development because she is a minor. The 8th ID falsely claimed that the military rescued Michelle from being a "child soldier". The NDF-Eastern Visayas firmly refuted the 8th ID's accusations, saying that at the age of 17, Michelle does not meet the age requirement to become an NPA guerrilla.

Meanwhile, officials of Barangay Nagpapacao and Del Rosario in the nearby town of Matuguinao exposed abuses by a composite force from the 63rd and 34th IB and the 83rd Division Reconnaissance Coy. They reported that the soldiers conducting operations have been coming in unannounced and camping out in the villages without notifying the civilian officials.

The peasants' poverty has also worsened, with their livelihoods and mobility adversely affected by the soldiers' enforcement of curfew hours in the area. The barangay officials also said that the soldiers use civilians as human shields. The *barangay tanod* (village guards) are brought along during operations and made to lead so that the soldiers will not be shot at by the NPA.

The barangay officials are also infuriated by Matuguinao Mayor Jocella Dy's inaction even though the peasants have repeatedly complained at the town hall about the soldiers' abuses.

AB



10th ID using civilians as human shields

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)'s establishment of military detachments and camps within civilian communities is a direct violation of international humanitarian law and war protocols. Several of these camps are a mere 500 meters distance from areas densely populated with civilians.

In Southern Mindanao in particular, as many as 306,637 civilians are directly affected and constantly in danger due to the proximity of military camps to their residences.

The AFP is purposely building camps in the midst of civilian communities so it can use the people as human shields against attacks by the New People's Army (NPA).

Also due to the proximity of reactionary military elements to the communities, several cases of human rights violations have taken place, especially forced recruitment into paramilitary groups like the CAFGU. In Lumad communities, the AFP uses paramilitary leaders from the ranks of national minorities to allege that the people accept the military presence. The AFP is also recruiting civilian agents to spy on their fellow villagers, stir up trouble and destroy the people's unity.

In Davao City, the military has been maintaining nine detachments—three in Toril, two in Cali-

nan and four in Paquibato—affecting 76,766 civilians. This is aside from the headquarters of the 10th ID in Panacan and Task Force Davao in Sta. Ana Wharf.

In Davao del Norte, there is a military detachment in Carmen and three in Asuncion. As many as 3,305 civilians are affected.

In Compostela Valley, there are 78 military detachments in the towns of Compostela, Mabini, Ma-co, Maragusan, Mawab, Monkayo, Montevista, Nabunturan, New Bataan, Pantukan and Laak, affecting 160,314 civilians.

In Davao Oriental, 20 military detachments can be found in the towns of Baganga, Banaybanay, Boston, Cateel, Lupon, San Isidro and Manay. There are 59,424 civilians affected.

In Trento, Agusan del Sur and Lingig, Surigao del Sur, there are two military detachments where 6,828 civilians are affected.

Particularly in Boston, Cateel, Lingig, Trento and Monkayo, there



are detachments or installations of the 72nd Cadre Battalion (CB), 23rd CB, 36th IB, 25th IB, 1105th Police Mobile Group (PMG), 1401st PMG, Philippine National Police, the Pulahan fanatic group and the private armies of the Brillantes family, warlord politicians in Compostela Valley.

All in all, there are 123 military detachments set up in civilian communities.

Due to the AFP's fear of becoming targets of the NPA's escalating tactical offensives, it has resorted to measures that endanger the lives of civilians.

AB

American soldiers suspected of killing Filipino interpreter

A Filipino found dead at a military camp in Marawi City is feared to have been brutalized and killed by American soldiers. The victim, Gregan Cardeño, 33, had only worked a few days as an interpreter for the American soldiers.

According to the Philippine National Police (PNP), at midnight on February 2, Cardeño allegedly hung himself with bedsheets at the 103rd Brigade camp of the Philippine Army in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.

But Cardeño's family and relatives believe that he was murdered. Their suspicions are based on the vic-

tim's accounts to his wife that he was being abused and raped by the American soldiers.

The morning of February 2, Cardeño's wife Myrna received texts and calls from her husband. Cardeño was crying when he told her to call the employment agency that placed him and rescind his contract so that he could leave the military camp. He said that he was not brought to his real destination but put into the American soldiers' barracks where he is the only Filipino.

Cardeño's family sought help from Kawagib, a hu-



man rights advocacy group in Mindanao. Kawagib investigated the camp where Cardeño died. They were joined by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and progressive organizations. Cardeño's family requested to be shown the room where he was found dead, including the bed sheets he purportedly used to hang himself. However, Capt. Michael Kay and officers of the 103rd Bde refused to present the evidence to them on the grounds that they are conducting their own investigation.

Wounds to the head, body, thigh, hand, and arms were found on Cardeño.

Cardeño's family also doubt statements made by Philippine Army officials. The autopsy of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) was also suspicious. Several details regarding the condition of Cardeño's body were not stated such as his swollen testicles and dilated anus. It also took a month before the NBI finally sent the incident report to Manila.

Cardeño's family was also surprised to see him half-naked and clad only in shorts when he was at the funeral home. This was inconsistent with the picture they saw of his body which was taken at the crime scene by SP03 Ali Guibon Rangiris of the PNP-Marawi City. In the picture, Cardeño was wearing a green T-shirt and blue jeans with his briefs slightly showing. The pictures, recorded messages and calls on his cellphone were also erased.

Cardeño's family is requesting the CHR to conduct a new autopsy on his body. They are also scheduled to file a case for obstruction of justice against the 103rd Brigade officers and American soldiers for destroying the evidence.

AB



Mass campaign against El Niño

Among the regions currently being pummeled by the prolonged dry spell brought about by El Niño, Cagayan Valley is the worst hit. Based on a report in the first part of March, the region has lost a total of ₱5.1 billion of rice, corn and fishery products. Even vegetable fields have been ruined. In the town of San Mateo, Isabela, imported mung beans are being sold in the market because there is none of the local variety left for the peasants to harvest.

Despite the severity of El Niño's devastation, the government has not yet given any assistance to the peasants. The distribution of rice and canned goods is still at the planning stage. Particularly in Isabela, the municipal government is still conducting surveys purportedly see how widespread the effect of the drought has been. The provincial government has lent the peasants 50 artesian wells. Considering that the province is one of the largest in the country, these wells are insufficient with only a select few being able to use them. And even if a farmer were equipped with a water pump, there is little or no water left in the rivers and streams.

Because the crops are perishing, many families are suffering severe hunger. There are reports that hundreds of peasants have been going into the forests to gather rattan poles which they sell for ₱5 per 10 feet. In one area of Central Isabela, 300 peasants spent a week logging in the forest. Others were also forced to engage in "carabao logging" (a term used to describe small-scale tree-cutting and the use of carabaos to haul cut logs).

On March 4, peasants traveled from Cagayan Valley to Manila to launch protest actions at the Department of Agriculture office in Quezon City. The protest was led by Danggayan dagiti Mannalon ti

Isabela (DAGAMI), Kagimungan Cagayan Chapter and Danggayan-Cagayan Valley, all of whom are affiliates of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

On the other hand, campaigns to advance the people's welfare during calamities are currently taking off. The people will hold the government accountable for its inutility when typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng struck. The government's neglect of agriculture in the region is especially deplorable since Cagayan Valley is one of the largest rice-producing areas in the country. They also plan to raise related issues such as the misappropriation of funds while paving the way for environmentally destructive projects. The most prominent among these projects involve large-scale logging and mining masterminded by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile in connivance with big imperialist companies.

The mass organizations are demanding that peasants with 20% or more of their crops damaged by calamity be exempted from paying land rent for a single harvest. If 50% or more has been damaged, land rent should be cancelled for the next two harvests. In tenanted lands flooded due to calamity, land rehabilitation costs will be calculated and will be deducted from the total land rent during a regular harvest. They also want the cancellation of interest payments in the case of farmers who suffered losses due to calamities. In cases where the damage sustained is 50% or more, payment on the principal will be deferred. Irrigation fees to the National Irrigation Administration and the Small Water Impounding Projects (a branch of the Department of Agriculture which constructs and runs small dams for farms) should also be cancelled.

AB

A hundred years of women's struggle

Progressive and revolutionary women militantly celebrated International Working Women's Day on March 8.

This celebration was particularly unique because it was also the 100th anniversary of the passage of the resolution declaring March 8 a special day for women. The resolution passed by the Second International Conference of Socialist Women was initiated by the first woman communist Clara Zeitkin. When the conference was held in Copenhagen, only three countries in the world recognized the right of women to vote. Women were treated as second class citizens under the law and in all other areas.

A century later, progressive and revolutionary women throughout the world have achieved significant victories. Women have asserted their right to suffrage and hold elective office in almost every country worldwide. Since then, women have attained their basic right to organize themselves and assert issues important to them and the entire society. They are in a position to advance their rights to education, work and equality in various fields. Within a century, women have been thorough and tireless in changing not only their lowly status but the society that engenders and perpetuates such conditions.

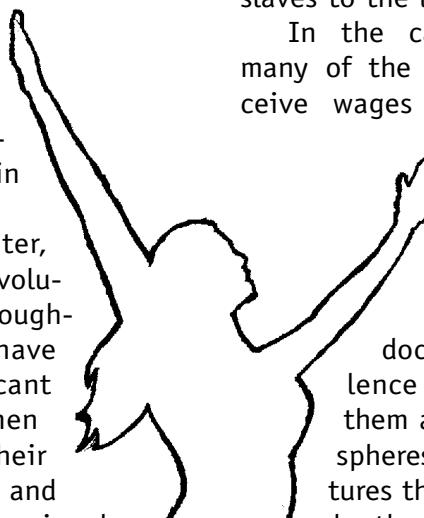
Progressive women are aware that genuine freedom and equality cannot be achieved under the rotten social system they find themselves in.

In an impoverished and backward country, women are the worst hit by the chronic economic crisis which is pummeling the local economy. They perform the most menial kinds of work in exchange for low or almost non-existent wages. They replace men when overall wage levels have to be lowered. On farms, their labor is considered free. Many of them are also made to serve as maids or slaves to the landlords.

In the capitalist countries, many of the women workers receive wages much lower than men. They suffer discrimination in different ways in offices and factories.

To keep women docile and timid, violence is used against them at various levels and spheres. Beliefs and cultures that place women under the authority of the ruling class, their families and husbands remain widespread. The most brutal methods such as rape and sexual violence are employed to ensure their submission. It is commonly known that such violence which violates their basic rights not just as women but as human beings is used by the ruling class and their armed henchmen especially against women in the lower classes and those who are courageous enough to resist.

In the Philippines, the current economic and political crisis intensifies the hardship and oppression suffered by Filipino women. They have long been vic-



tims of the Arroyo regime's pro-imperialist policies of liberalization, privatization and deregulation. At the same time, they are victims of political violence under the antipeople Oplan Bantay Laya.

Half of the unemployed are women. Many of them are deceived by illegal recruiters promising decent jobs abroad. The majority of the 12 million migrant workers are women. In addition to low wages and horrid working conditions, many of them endure physical and sexual abuse at the hands of their employers. In the countryside, 70% of the peasants and farm workers are women. They suffer the loss of their earnings due to liberalization policies, unmitigated importation of agricultural products and the reactionary state's overall neglect of

Women march to Mendiola

MGABRIELA and the Gabriela Women's Party launched a protest action in front of Malacañang on March 8. The marchers hailed from several sectors including the youth, workers, migrant workers, urban poor and peasants. Progressive candidates and other politicians and personalities also joined them.

Bannering the call "Women unite, fight the crisis and political violence," they declared March 8 as the National Day of Protest for Filipino Women.

Similar protests were also held in Davao, Cebu, Baguio, Iloilo and Bacolod and several other areas in Southern Tagalog and Bicol. Outside the country, concurrent activities were launched by women migrants in Hong Kong, Amsterdam in The Netherlands, and the US. **AB**

agriculture.

Filipino women are demanding a decent living through adequate work, food on the table, suitable housing, and social services like

education and health. The struggle for all of this goes hand in hand with the struggle to destroy this backward and oppressive system. **AB**

For privatization

Malacañang intervenes in appointment of new PGH director

Malacañang cannot hide its hand in the controversial appointment of a new director at the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH). At the latest meeting of the UP Board of Regents (BOR), members appointed by Gloria Arroyo brazenly maneuvered to block the election of Dr. Jose Gonzales who had the support of representatives of the students, teachers, employees and alumni at the meeting. Malacañang had wanted to reinstall Dr. Carmelo Alfiler who is on his third term as hospital director and is Arroyo's personal friend.

In fact, Gonzales was formally elected hospital director at the BOR meeting on December 18, 2009. Before the voting took place, Arroyo had ordered board member Abraham Sarmiento to declare that student representative Charisse Bañez was not qualified to vote because she was no longer enrolled and thus was no longer a university student. Even so, the members voted to allow Bañez's participation, which then

became decisive in Gonzales' election.

But on December 23, Sarmiento protested the election results and said that Bañez no longer had the right to participate in the voting. At the end of December, Malacañang ordered Commission on Higher Education and BOR chair Emmanuel Angeles to support Alfiler.

Gonzales' appointment was thus deferred pending the resolu-

tion of Sarmiento's complaint. When the BOR reconvened on February 5, Malacañang's minions maneuvered once again to rescind Gonzales' appointment. In the new round of voting, Dr. Rolando Enrique Domingo, who has the Palace's support was elected PGH director. Domingo had been out of the running after he was declared unqualified for the position in December.

The reason: privatization. It has now come to light that Malacañang's maneuvers to secure the PGH leadership is due to a multi-million peso deal leasing several hospital facilities to the private sector. The final contract stipulates that UP-PGH will be leasing to the Daniel Mercado Medical Center (DMMC) its Dispensary

Building for 25 years at a cost of ₱202 per square meter. The three-storey building has a total area of almost 5,000 square meters.

The All-UP Workers' Alliance (AUPWA) has opposed the lease contract, saying that PGH will be on the losing end of the deal. According to AUPWA national executive vice president Jossel Ebese, the Philippine National Bank has been leasing the same location since the 1990s at the much higher rate of ₱456 per square meter.

The alliance also fears that the DMMC will compete with PGH's pharmacy which contributes ₱24-30 million yearly to the hospital's maintenance fund and pays the salaries of more than 200 employees. PGH stands to lose a lot financially with the DMMC paying only ₱12 million in rent yearly in the first five years of the contract. These estimates do not include expenses for other operations such as laboratory, radiology and diagnostic exams for which the DMMC will be a competitor.

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Tuition fee hikes opposed

The Kabataan Partylist and NUSP slammed the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) because of its inaction on complaints against college tuition hikes. According to NUSP, the CHED has done nothing to restrain university owners from raising tuition fees.

Meanwhile, 1,000 Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) students walked out of their classes on March 19 to oppose the impending increase of their tuition fees. They marched from PUP in Sta. Mesa up to Mendiola in Manila. Tuition fees will be raised by 2,000% (from ₱12 per unit to ₱200 per unit) which will be charged the following school year to incoming first year students. There are also other planned fees to be imposed. The students' next major mass action is scheduled on March 29 at their university's Board of Regents (BOR) meeting.

AB

The Cojuangco family will never relinquish Hacienda Luisita

A nakpawis party Rep. Rafael Mariano criticized Liberal Party presidential candidate Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino for posturing that he is for genuine land reform when he has no real interest in implementing it.

Mariano was reacting to a recent statement by Aquino in a television interview that the first thing he would do should he be elected president is to distribute the Hacienda Luisita Incorporated (HLI) lands to the peasants.

The progressive representative and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) chair said that Aquino promised agrarian reform only to advance his candidacy. In fact, Aquino's statement was contradicted by his first cousin Fernando Cojuangco, who was quoted in an article recently published in the *New York Times*.

Cojuangco, chief operating offi-

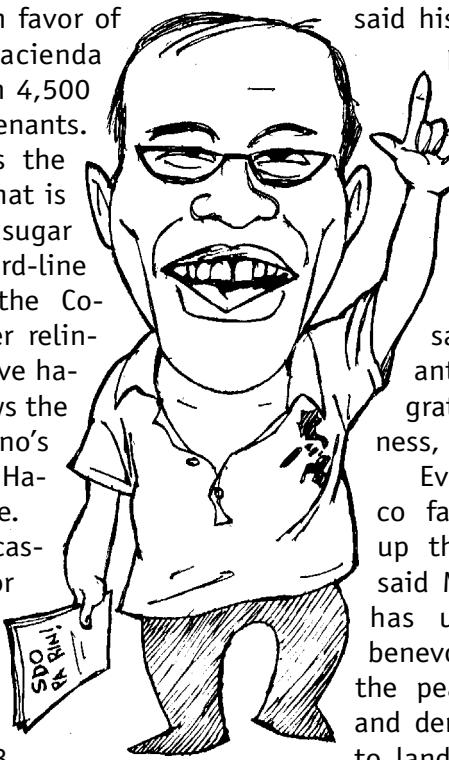
cer of Azucarera de Tarlac and of Jose Cojuangco and Sons, said their clan is not in favor of distributing Hacienda Luisita's more than 4,500 hectares to the tenants. He said that it is the hacienda system that is best suited to the sugar industry. Such a hard-line declaration that the Cojuangcos will never relinquish their extensive hacienda clearly shows the emptiness of Aquino's statement on the Hacienda Luisita issue.

Mariano also castigated Aquino for his arrogance in saying that the Cojuangco-Aquino family could have already made ₱3 billion from selling the hacienda, if

they really did not care about the peasants' interests. Aquino said his family would first pay off the hacienda's debts before distributing the land to the tenants. Aquino wants to appear benevolent and kind-hearted and says that the peasants should even be grateful for their kindness, said Mariano.

Even so, the Cojuangco family cannot cover up the truth with lies, said Mariano. The family has used its so-called benevolence to massacre the peasants and exploit and deny them their right to land, said the progressive representative.

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Elements for Arroyo's stay in power nearing completion

The Arroyo clique is fast tracking the completion of the key ingredients to its various schemes that will not only enable Gloria Arroyo to stay in power beyond her present term but avoid being held accountable by the people for her crimes.

The latest of the clique's measures was the Supreme Court decision on March 17 allowing Arroyo to appoint a new chief justice in place of the current one who is set to retire. The Judicial and Bar Council has already been requested to provide a list of nominees so that Arroyo can choose Chief Justice Reynato Puno's replacement. Arroyo wants the list submitted a week before Puno's retirement on May 17. The JBC is responsible for screening all applications and recommendations for Supreme Court positions.

The Supreme Court decision overturns an earlier ruling in 1998. It also violates the government's constitutional provision prohibiting the incumbent president from appointing new government chiefs 60 days before the presidential election until the end of the president's term. If the reactionary constitution is adhered to, it is the newly elected president who should be choosing the chief justice's replacement. But because the new president will not be taking office until June 30, the most senior magistrate will take over as officer in charge.

Arroyo's problem is that she has no control over the Supreme Court's most senior magistrate Justice Antonio Carpio. Carpio has also declared that if chosen by Arroyo, he would decline because he firmly believes that his appointment will be violative of the constitution. Arroyo now plans to replace Chief Justice Puno with

her former chief of staff and spokesperson Justice Renato Corona. Corona is the most loyal of Arroyo's acolytes in the Supreme Court. During his entire stint at the high tribunal, all the positions he took favored Arroyo's interests.

Several sectors are filing motions for reconsideration with the Supreme Court regarding its decision, among them lawyers, constitutionalists and progressive and anti-Arroyo forces.

The Supreme Court's decision has been met with a flurry of protests. On March 19, various groups rallied in front of the court to condemn what they called the cowardly magistrates who issued the decision. Among the leaders of the protest were Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño; Sen. Francis Pangilinan, a

member of the Judicial and Bar Council; former NEDA chief Solita Monsod; and lawyer and senatorial candidate Adel Tamano. Kabataan Partylist members burned a tarpaulin with pictures of the nine Supreme Court justices who issued the decision.

Earlier, Arroyo also ensured her firm control over the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) leadership and its key commands.

On March 8, Arroyo appointed her favorite general Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit as the new AFP chief instead of simply extending Gen. Victor Ibrado's term and letting her successor choose his replacement. On March 12, Arroyo also appointed Maj. Gen. Reynaldo Mapagu as Philippine Army chief, replacing Bangit. She also appointed Rear Admiral Feliciano Angue as AFP National Capital Region Command (NRCOM) chief.

All of Arroyo's newly appointed military officers belong to Philippine Military Academy Class 1978, whose members Arroyo has pampered in exchange for their loyalty. Arroyo herself is an adopted member of PMA Class '78. Other mem-



bers of this class already appointed by Arroyo to various AFP leadership positions are Philippine Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Oscar Rabena; Southern Luzon Command chief Lt. Gen. Roland Detabali; AFP Central Command chief Lt. Gen. Ralph Villanueva; ISAFP (Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines) chief Brig. Gen. Romeo Prestoza; and Director Roberto Rosales of the Metro Manila Police Office who is touted to replace PNP Chief Jesus Versoza.

Meanwhile, talk is rife nowadays that Oplan August Full Moon, said to be a plot to defraud the election to secure the victory of Arroyo's favored candidates, kick off charter change and have Arroyo sit as prime minister under a new parliamentary system has been set into full motion.

If this falls through, however, the Arroyo camp will switch to the failure of elections scheme in order to create a pretext for declaring a state of emergency if not outright martial law, with Arroyo clinging to power as "transition president". Arroyo's new Deputy Spokesperson Charito Planas has also admitted that in case of a power vacuum due to a failure of elections, it is the military that will be taking over.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, who was martial law administrator during the Marcos dictatorship, had already floated this idea earlier. A key ingredient in this plan is the appointment of Norberto Gonzales to the Department of National Defense, and of Bangit, Mapagu, Prestoza and others in the AFP to continue Arroyo's hold on military power. Corona's appointment as Supreme Court chief justice is the other key, his role being to provide the legal endorsement for Arroyo's maneuvers.

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Kontra-Daya demands expulsion of 6 Arroyo party-list groups

KONTRA-DAYA and its member organizations picketed in front of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) offices on March 15 and called for the expulsion of six party-list groups which they said are funded by the Arroyo government.

Kontra-Daya identified the following as pro-administration party-list groups: Bata Iwas Droga (BIDA), Adhikain ng mga Dakilang Anak ng Maharlika (ADAM), Agbiag Timpuyog Ilocano (AGBIAG), Babae para sa Kaunlaran (BABAE KA), League of Youth for Peace and Development (LYPAD) and Kalahi Advocates for Overseas Filipinos (KALAHII). They said that they are connected with and are provided funds by the Arroyo government. In particular, BIDA is funded by PAGCOR (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation) Chairman Ephraim Genuino and is linked to the Dept. of Education

and Dangerous Drugs Board. ADAM is under Department of Energy Undersecretary Zamzamin Ampatuan who is the group's first nominee.

According to a secret memo whose existence has been exposed, the Palace is directly funding Agbiag, Babae Ka, Kalahi and Lypad.

Kontra-Daya convenor Fr. Jose Dizon said that these party-list groups were formed by Arroyo to serve her ambition to take office as the representative of the second district of Pampanga and eventually become House Speaker. He also added that these groups are breaking the law regarding a ban on organizations linked to and funded by the government. Dizon also said that there are 40 other party-list groups that are said to be funded by the government or by the military and big politicians which the COMELEC should remove.

Kabataan Partylist opposes graduation fees

KABATAAN Partylist Rep. Raymond Palatino strongly demanded a ban on the imposition of graduation fees on students finishing school this year. Palatino said the Department of Education (Dep Ed) should monitor schools charging payments for graduation. His party has been receiving several complaints regarding schools trying to enforce such fees.

According to Kabataan Partylist, as many as 40 public schools were charging mandatory graduation fees ranging from ₱100 to ₱5,000 per student. Palatino said

that the solution to this is for the government to allot a sufficient budget for all of the students' expenses. Palatino challenged the newly appointed Secretary of Education Mona Valisno to address this issue.

The National Union of Students in the Philippines (NUSP) rushed the DepEd offices on March 19 to protest the ongoing collection of graduation fees in schools. The NUSP said that parents were being threatened that their children would not be allowed to join the graduation march should they fail to pay the fees.

Scientists question declaration of state of calamity in Mindanao

SCIENTISTS questioned Gloria Arroyo's March 11 declaration of a state of calamity in Mindanao. According to Agham (Samahang Nagtataguyod ng Agham at Teknolohiya para sa Sambayanan), this move is the wrong answer to the energy crisis and is another way of squandering of funds.

The step which has been taken supposedly in response to the island's existing energy crisis allows municipal, provincial and city officials to tap into 5% of their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). The national government will also set aside ₱10 billion for the speedy

purchase or lease of power generators without going through the public bidding process.

According to Engineer Archie Orillosa of Agham, the purchase of power generators is not the solution. Not only is it pricey, but it will also take several months before coming into full operation.

Orillosa said that the National Power Corporation (NAPACOR) should instead turn its attention to the rehabilitation of energy plants whose capacities have long gone unmaximized due to their inefficient maintenance. He gave as an example the Pulangi power plant,

one of the largest in Mindanao which only generates 50 megawatts although its full capacity is 250 megawatts.

He added that producing power using the generators is extremely expensive. No less than the Department of Energy has admitted that electric bills will go up 200% should these generators be used to produce power.

Agham suspects that the Arroyo regime only wants to release the billion peso fund in order for the Arroyos and their lackeys to secretly squander it in the elections.

Worsening poverty and hunger undeniable

THE truth is evident despite Arroyo's unceasing delusion that the principle legacy she will leave to the next administration and country are the so-called economic reforms and development that resulted from her stint as Philippine president.

In reality, the country has suffered the highest levels of unemployment under almost ten years of the US-Arroyo regime, including declining job quality and the transformation of millions of regular job holders to semiproletariats with little or no work. The backwardness of the country's overall economy has worsened with industry and even agriculture taking a downturn. The government has suffered a series of financial crises. Its debt burden and the amount set aside for debt servicing are at an all-time high. Social services have deteriorated at the fastest rate ever. The regime has done nothing in the face of the international crisis' severe effect on the local economy but to claim that it has set aside huge amounts in stimulus funds, which merely ended up being pocketed by the ruling clique.

The regime has also done nothing to help the people deal with the severe calamities and destruction they have suffered. The worst of these is the serious decline of numerous families' livelihoods amid soaring prices of food, oil, electricity and other basic needs.

Poverty and hunger have worsened. But the regime continues to cover it all up.

Arroyo's officials were straining to come up with rationalizations after the president's economic adviser Albay Gov. Joey Salceda admitted that since 2001, the poor have gotten poorer while the rich have gotten richer.

Even going by the National Statistics Office's doctored figures, the number of people who said they were now hungrier and poorer than they used to be almost doubled from 11.4% in 2000 to 20.3% in 2009.

These NSO statistics are actually way off from the reality that even more Filipinos are suffering from poverty. The government has tampered with data on poverty incidence by lowering poverty thresholds. In the face of such glaring poverty, Arroyo's officials have the gall to make excuses and say that the incidence of income inequality alongside economic growth cannot be avoided. The Arroyo regime allegedly has programs for the poor such as the provision of monetary assistance, cheap rice and medicines and free education.

However, the truth is that such programs merely serve to fatten the pockets of Arroyo's officials and are useless in terms of providing significant or even temporary relief to the people.